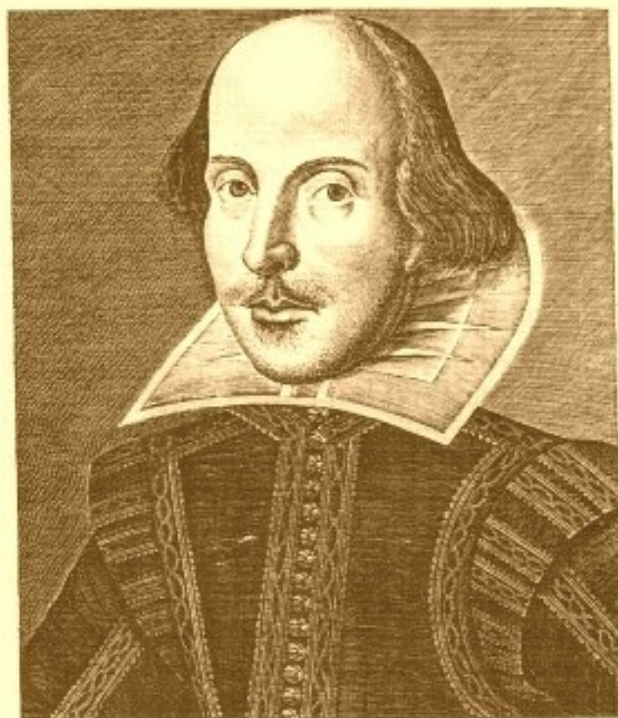


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to Modern English - for contemporary
readers and performers

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Shakespeare For White Trash: Henry VIII

Classic literature translated into Modern English by Crad Kilodney

October 7, 2010 – Author’s Note:

“Shakespeare For White Trash” is a series of condensed rewrites designed to make Shakespeare understandable and enjoyable to those who have little or no knowledge of him. The plots and characters are unchanged, but everything else has been radically restyled. Read my versions and you’ll be a Shakespeare fan forever!

These plays are intended to be performed, as well as read.

Main Characters

King Henry VIII

Queen Katharine (This is Catherine of Aragon, the first of Henry’s six wives. She was the daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain.)

Duke of Norfolk (This is Thomas Howard, 2nd Duke of Norfolk [Third creation] and grandfather to both Anne Boleyn and Catherine Howard, Henry’s second and fifth wives and, coincidentally, the two who were executed.)

Duke of Buckingham (This is Edward Stafford, 3rd Duke of Buckingham.)

Lord Abergavenny (Pronounced “Aberganny.” This is George Neville, son-in-law to Buckingham.)

Cardinal Thomas Wolsey — Lord Chancellor and Archbishop of York

Secretary to Cardinal Wolsey

Brandon — Officer of the King

Sergeant-at-Arms

Sir Thomas Lovell — Constable of the Tower

Duke of Suffolk (This is Charles Brandon, 1st Duke of Suffolk [Second creation]. He was married to King Henry’s sister Mary.)

Overseer to Buckingham (Referred to as “Surveyor” in other texts. This is an estate manager.)

(The) Lord Chamberlain

Lord Sands (or “Sandys” in some texts)

Anne Bullen (Anne Boleyn)

Three Gentlemen

Sir Nicholas Vaux

Cardinal Campeius — the Pope’s representative

Gardiner — the King’s secretary; later Bishop of Winchester.

Old Lady — friend of Anne Bullen

Bishop of Lincoln

Earl of Surrey (This is Thomas Howard, son of Norfolk and later 3rd Duke of Norfolk.)

(Thomas) Cromwell — servant to Cardinal Wolsey

(Thomas) Cranmer (He was originally the chaplain of Anne Boleyn’s family; later Archbishop of Canterbury.)

Griffith and Patience — servants to Queen Katharine

Lord Capucius — ambassador of the Emperor Charles of the Holy Roman Empire

Sir Anthony Denny

Doctor Butts — the King’s physician

(The) Lord Chancellor (Sir Thomas More as of Act 5)

Doorkeeper

Two Heralds (of which one is dressed as a noble)

Lord Mayor of London (non-speaking role)

Duchess of Norfolk (non-speaking role)

Marchioness of Dorset (non-speaking role)

Angels (non-speaking)

(Sir Henry Guilford is deleted.)

Gist of the story: The historical period of this play is 1520-1533. Henry VIII has left most of the business of governing to his Lord Chancellor, Cardinal Thomas Wolsey. Wolsey is an ambitious power-player, who has made himself rich. He frames the Duke of Buckingham on bogus charges and has him executed. In foreign affairs, he is playing off France and the Holy Roman Empire against each other. Henry falls in love with Anne Bullen (Anne Boleyn) and wants to dump Queen Katharine. He asks Wolsey to fix an annulment with the Church. Wolsey doesn’t want Henry to marry Anne. He wants him to marry the sister of the French king. So he delays the annulment. His double-dealing is

exposed, and he is ruined. The new Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, is falsely accused of heresy by Gardiner, Wolsey's former secretary and now the Bishop of Winchester. But Henry protects him. Henry has divorced Katharine and married Anne Bullen, and at the end of the play, baby Elizabeth, the future Elizabeth I, is christened.

(Once again, the reader is cautioned that Shakespeare has tweaked the details of history for the sake of the story line, and that's putting it mildly. The Yale Shakespeare edition of 1925 has excellent historical notes. *Henry VIII* differs from the other history plays in that it is more like a few historical episodes strung together than a continuous story line. Scholars believe it was written hastily and that at least one other writer had a hand in it, based on differences of writing style. They also believe the main purpose of the play was to "deliver" Queen Elizabeth I to the audience and pay indirect tribute to her successor, James I. These were the two monarchs during whose reigns Shakespeare lived and wrote. Henry VIII is best remembered for having six wives and for executing more people than any other English monarch. Historically, he was the most interesting of the seven English kings Shakespeare wrote about. Unfortunately, the play does not reflect this. The character you will love most in this play is Queen Katharine. She is the best queen in all of Shakespeare — a model of dignity and goodness. I have given her a very respectful treatment. This is the first modernized version of *Henry VIII* ever published.)

Act 1, Scene 1. *[Historical time: 1520.] An antechamber in the King's palace in London. The Duke of Norfolk comes in from one side, and the Duke of Buckingham and Lord Abergavenny come in from the other.*

Buckingham: Hey, Norfolk, wassup?

Norfolk: Duke of Buckingham—Lord Abergavenny—Did you guys miss me?

Buckingham: Sure. How was France?

Norfolk: Awesome. You should have been there. *[Author's note: One of many historical inaccuracies in the play. In fact, it was Buckingham who went to France with King Henry and Norfolk who stayed behind.]*

Buckingham: I was sick in bed the whole time. So how did it go?

Norfolk: It was a real spectacle. You should have seen the two Kings—Henry and Francis—all decked out in their finest clothes. And all their entourage. Everybody was dressed up. Everyone wanted to show off. You'd never know England and France had ever been at war. It was all glitz and partying. And the field games were sensational.

Buckingham: I'll bet.

Norfolk: Oh, they were. All the English soldiers and the French soldiers were competing with each other. And Henry and Francis were into it, too, on their horses. And the crowds were cheering and whooping it up. And it went on for almost two weeks. It was the greatest party you could imagine. All for a good cause, of course. Peace between England and France.

Buckingham (Facetiously): Was the Holy Roman Empire invited?

Norfolk: Ha!—Yeah, right! Holy Roman Empire. Never heard of it.

Buckingham: And who organized this extravaganza, as if I couldn't guess?

Norfolk: Why, the Archbishop of York, of course—Cardinal Thomas Wolsey. Who else?

Buckingham: Right. The second-most powerful man in England and the Number One glory hog. The Lord Chancellor. Henry wears the crown, but Wolsey actually runs everything. And believe me, whatever he does, he's thinking of himself first.

Norfolk: Oh, well, now, you have to give credit where it's due. He wouldn't have risen to such a position in life if he didn't have any talent.

Aber: Oh, he's got talent, all right—the way the devil has talent.

Buckingham: Exactly. And who paid for this expensive trip? The nobles. And who bent their arms for the money? Wolsey. All by his own authority. There isn't a pocket in England he can't put his hand into.

Aber: That's for damn sure. Special taxes. Forced loans. Some of my own relatives have gotten bled so much they'll never recover.

Buckingham: And was the trip really worth it? Was it really necessary to blow all that money?

Norfolk: Well—I don't know.

Buckingham: And afterwards there was a big storm.

Norfolk: Oh, God, don't mention that.

Buckingham: That was an evil omen. Everyone was talking about it. They were saying the peace isn't going to last. And why should it? When has there ever been permanent peace with France? It's just a phase.

Norfolk: You could be right. Some of our merchant ships got held up in Bordeaux and their goods were confiscated.

Aber: Aha! Some peace!

Buckingham: I blame Wolsey for everything. He's like a puppet master. He's playing France and the Empire off against each other, that's all. He makes the foreign policy, not the King. Anybody wants to buy our goodwill, they have to go to Wolsey.

Norfolk: Buckingham, it's no secret that you and the Cardinal have your differences. But just be careful about him. He has a lot of power. And he can be vindictive. You don't want to be too public about how much you hate him, or he'll crush you.—Oh!—I think I hear him.

(Cardinal Wolsey comes in and pauses on his way through. He is with a Guard and a Secretary. He speaks to his Secretary just to annoy Buckingham, and the Cardinal and Buckingham have hostile eye contact.)

Cardinal: Ahem—Do you have the file for the Duke of Buckingham's overseer?

Secy: Yes, your Grace—right here.

Cardinal: Is he here in person?

Secy: Yes.

Cardinal: Good. Then we will find out a thing or two about Buckingham.

(The Cardinal and his party leave.)

Buckingham: That son of a bitch! I'd like to strangle him!

Norfolk: Calm down. Don't blow a head valve.

Buckingham: You know what he's up to. He's going to the King with some bullshit accusation against me. I should have it out with him right in front of the King.

Norfolk: No, no, I wouldn't recommend that. You don't want to blow up in front of the King.

Buckingham (Takes a deep breath): I guess you're right. But I'm telling you Wolsey is corrupt—and he's a traitor.

Norfolk: Don't say traitor. That's over the line.

Buckingham: It's the truth, and I'll tell the King if I get the chance. Wolsey's just totally bad. He is. And the King should stop listening to him. You want to know what's over the line? I'll tell you. This trip to France. It practically blew the whole treasury.

Norfolk: Well, maybe it was expensive.

Buckingham: Listen, Wolsey's got a secret relationship with Charles, the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. The Queen is Charles's aunt, you know.

Norfolk: Yes, yes.

Buckingham: Charles came here supposedly to visit the Queen, but it was really to have a secret meeting with Wolsey. Charles doesn't like it that we've made peace with France. He and the French King are enemies. So now he's worried about his relationship with us. That's why he came here—to get Wolsey to break up the peace. And you can be sure he paid Wolsey for help, and Wolsey's going to string him along.

Norfolk: Well, you don't know that for a fact.

Buckingham: It's true. And it's about time somebody exposed him to the King for his double-dealing. He's just a fucking influence peddler.

(Brandon, an officer of the King, comes in with the Sergeant-at-Arms and several Guards.)

Brandon: Go ahead, Sergeant.

Sergeant: My lord Duke of Buckingham, in the name of the King, you are under arrest for treason.

Buckingham: Fuck me.—Goodbye, Abergavenny. Good luck.

Brandon: Lord Abergavenny has to come, too. King's orders.

Aber: God save me.

Buckingham: Who else is under arrest, if you don't mind my asking?

Brandon: Lord Montacute, John de la Car, Gilbert Peck, and Nicholas Hopkins.

Buckingham: My overseer's a liar, you know. The Cardinal bribed him.

Brandon: I'm just an officer of King doing my job, my lord.

Buckingham (To Norfolk): I'm not surprised. Anyway, goodbye, Norfolk.

(They shake hands.)

Norfolk: Goodbye, Buckingham.

(All leave except Norfolk.)

Act 1, Scene 2. *The Council Chamber. The King comes in, close together with Cardinal Wolsey, plus a Secretary to the Cardinal, some Nobles, and Sir Thomas Lovell, the Constable of the Tower. The King sits above the others, with the Cardinal closest to him.*

King (To the Cardinal): It's a good thing you stopped this conspiracy. Now let's hear what Buckingham's overseer has to say.

(Noise is heard offstage: "Make way for the Queen!" Queen Katharine comes in with Norfolk and Suffolk. Everyone rises.)

King: Oh!—Madam—sit beside me.

(The Queen kneels instead.)

Queen: I must kneel, my lord, like anyone else who comes to ask you for something.

King: Oh, ask away. Anything. Come and sit by me. *(She sits beside him, and everyone else sits down.)* Now what's on your mind?

Queen: My lord, I must tell you that the people are very, very unhappy about the new taxes, supposedly to pay for the past war against France. They are most angry with the Lord Cardinal, but they are also blaming you. This may lead to a rebellion.

King: A rebellion?

Norfolk: My lord, people have lost their jobs. For instance, the clothiers have had to lay off many of their workers—all because of the taxes.

King: What taxes?—My Lord Cardinal, what taxes are they talking about?

Cardinal: Em—I don't know any more than anyone else.

Queen: You certainly do know. They were your idea and you rammed them through the Council.

Cardinal: I'm just one man, madam.

King (To the Queen): What tax is this?

Queen: One-sixth of everyone's wealth!

King: One-sixth? I didn't know about this.

Cardinal: The Council agreed to it, sir.

King: But one-sixth? My goodness, no wonder the people are upset.

Cardinal: The people always complain, but that's no reason to hold back on things that are necessary.

King: But this goes too far. I want those taxes cancelled. And anyone who refused to pay is pardoned.

Cardinal: As you wish, my lord. (*Aside to his Secretary*) Send letters to all the counties saying the taxes are revoked. And be sure to say that I was the one who revoked them.

(The Secretary leaves.)

King: Now let's deal with that other matter. Bring in Buckingham's overseer.

(The Cardinal goes out.)

Queen: I'm very sorry that Buckingham is in trouble. I would just encourage you not to jump to conclusions.

King: Yes, yes. We're all sorry that he's in trouble. He's a highly intelligent man. Very capable. We all respected him and trusted him. But even a person of high standing and ability can be corrupted by his own ambition. We'll hear what the overseer has to say.

(The Cardinal returns with the Overseer.)

Cardinal: Now, sir, tell the King everything you know about the Duke of Buckingham.

King: Yes. I want to know everything.

Overseer: Yes, my lord. First of all, the Duke was always saying that if your Majesty died without any heirs, he'd fix it so he'd become King. He said this to his son-in-law, Lord Abergavenny. And he also swore to get even with the Lord Cardinal.

Cardinal: You see how evil he is, my lord?

King: And how exactly did he expect to make any sort of claim to the throne?

Overseer: It was a monk named Nicholas Henton who put the idea in his head.

King: Who's he?

Overseer: He's the Duke of Buckingham's confessor at Chartreux.

King: And how do you know what he said to Buckingham?

Overseer: Before your Majesty took that trip to France, the Duke asked me what the people in London were saying about it. And I told him that the people were suspicious of the French—that is, they might do you some harm. And he said that's what Nicholas Henton said to John de la Car, the Duke's chaplain. Henton prophesied a bad end for your Majesty and urged the Duke to win over the people and take the crown.

Queen: Just a minute. *(To the King)* My lord, this man was fired by Buckingham on the complaints of the tenant farmers he was overseeing, so naturally he has a grudge against Buckingham.

King: Oh?—Well, never mind. *(To the Overseer)* Go on. Tell me everything.

Overseer: It's all true, sir. I told the Duke that this Henton fellow was cracked and he oughtn't to listen to him. And the Duke said—that if you had died the last time you were sick—he'd be in charge and the Cardinal and Sir Thomas Lovell would be dead by now.

King: Really!—Well!—What a villain!—What else?

Overseer: The Duke said his father, Sir Henry, the previous Duke of Buckingham, made a big mistake in not killing King Richard when he had the chance, and then Richard had him executed. *[Author's note: Richard III.]* And he said he wouldn't make the same mistake.

King: So!—Well, well, well, well, well!—That's all I need to hear. Now he'll stand trial. And he'll get no mercy from me.—Council is adjourned.

(The King leads everyone out.)

Act 1, Scene 3. *A room in the palace. The Lord Chamberlain and Lord Sands come in. [Author's note: Chamberlain is not a name, it's a position. The Lord Chamberlain is the manager of the King's household. At this time it was Charles Somerset, Earl of Worcester.]*

Chamberlain: These guys are nuts ever since they came back from France.

Sands: The French don't have to invade us. All they have to do is infect us with their fashions.

Chamberlain: Like those stupid pants.

Sands: Oh, my God. Those short little puffy pants and those long stockings up to here *(Indicates mid-thigh)*.

Chamberlain: Makes 'em look like ballerinas from outer space.

(Sir Thomas Lovell comes in.)

Sands: Sir Thomas Lovell, wassup?

Lovell: Have you see the new proclamation posted on the court gate?

Sands: No. What's it say?

Lovell: It's an order to the men to stop dressing like French sissy-boys or they'll be put on a boat and sent there for good.

Chamberlain: Thank God for that.

Sands: Stop the insanity. That's what I say.

Chamberlain: Right on.

Sands: Otherwise the women might decide they like it, and then where will we be?

Chamberlain: We won't be having a good time, that's for sure.

Sands: Well, I'm not changing my wardrobe to compete with a bunch of fashionistas.

Chamberlain: Me neither.

Sands: Gender-benders. That's what I call them.

Chamberlain: That's funny.—So where are you going, Lovell?

Lovell: There's a big dinner party at Cardinal Wolsey's house—and you fellows are invited.

Chamberlain: Oh! Brilliant!

Lovell: He's a generous guy, that Cardinal. A great host. Spares no expense.

Chamberlain: That's for sure.

Sands: Well, he can afford it, so why not? Besides, how would it look if a man in his position was cheap with his hospitality?

Chamberlain: He's a model of liberality—toward his friends, I mean—and no one can say otherwise.—Come on. Let's go.

(They all leave.)

Act 1, Scene 4. *Cardinal Wolsey's house. The dinner is in progress. Seated are Cardinal Wolsey, the Lord Chamberlain, Lord Sands, Lovell, and other Nobles, seated alternately with Ladies. Sands is seated next to Anne Bullen and is trying to flirt with her.*

Sands: So, uh, are you a friend of the King?

Anne: No, I'm a friend of the Queen. But my sister knows the King very well. *[Author's note: Shakespeare doesn't refer to this, but Mary Boleyn was one of Henry's mistresses.]*

Sands: Oh, yeah?—Oh.—So is she as hot-looking as you?

Anne: I think she's more beautiful.

Sands: That's hard to imagine, heh, heh.—I like what you're wearing, by the way.

Anne: Thank you.

Sands: So, uh, you got a boyfriend?

Anne: Boyfriend?—No, I don't.

Sands: Oh. So, like, maybe we could, uh, you know, get together some time.

(A Servant comes in and speaks to the Cardinal.)

Servant: Your Grace, some strangers have arrived. They speak French.

Cardinal (To the Lord Chamberlain): My Lord Chamberlain, you speak French. Go and find out who they are, and if they're gentlemen, let them in.

Chamberlain: I will, sir.

(The Lord Chamberlain goes out. After a brief interval he returns.)

Chamberlain: Your Grace, the visitors are French. They heard there was a party here tonight, and they knew your reputation for hospitality, so they wanted to come in and mingle.

Cardinal: Wonderful. I'm happy to have them. Show them in.

(The Lord Chamberlain goes out and returns with King Henry and several other men, all disguised as shepherds.)

Shepherds: Salut! Bon soir!

Cardinal (Laughing): Come on in! I don't know who you are, but have a drink!—Hey, let's have some music and dance with the ladies!

(Music begins. The Shepherds have a drink, and then couples pair off and dance. King Henry dances with Anne Bullen.)

Cardinal (To the Lord Chamberlain): Who are those guys? Somehow they don't look French to me.

Chamberlain: I'm not saying.

(When the music stops, the Cardinal approaches King Henry.)

Cardinal: Say, don't I know you?

King: Moi? Non, monsieur.

Cardinal: Yes, I do. I know you.—You're the King!

(King Henry removes the disguise. Everyone laughs and applauds.)

King: I guess you can't hide royalty, can you?

Chamberlain: Not for long, sir.

(The King takes Anne Bullen by the hand.)

King: Who is this lady?

Chamberlain: This is Anne Bullen. She's the daughter of Sir Thomas Bullen.

King: Well, well, well! Anne Bullen. I know your sister *(Coughs)*—slightly.

Anne: Yes, my lord.

King: Why is it that when I look at you, I think of cherry cheesecake?

Anne: I suppose your Majesty likes cherry cheesecake.

King: It's one of my weaknesses—among others. *(Fanning himself with his hand)* It's a bit warm in here. Or am I just excited?

Cardinal: Let's go into the other room where it's cooler. I'll break out the champagne.—Come, everyone.

(They all leave.)

Act 2, Scene 1. *Two Gentlemen meet on a street in London.*

1st Gent: Where are you going?

2nd Gent: To Buckingham's trial at Westminster.

1st Gent: Forget it. It's already over. He was convicted.

2nd Gent: Were you there?

1st Gent: Yes.

2nd Gent: What happened?

1st Gent: He pleaded not guilty, and then some witnesses spoke against him, and he was sentenced to death for treason.

2nd Gent: That's terrible. How did he take it?

1st Gent: Bravely, I thought.

2nd Gent: Wolsey was behind this, I'll bet.

1st Gent: For sure. Anybody crosses Wolsey, they're dead meat. And anybody tries to talk to the King without going through Wolsey, they get targeted. He doesn't want anyone else influencing the King. He's practically sent people into exile, sending them far away from London on minor business.

2nd Gent: All the people hate him, and so do I. But everyone loves Buckingham. A true gentleman.

1st Gent: Here he comes. Let's step back a bit.

(The two Gentlemen move apart as Buckingham comes in as a prisoner, escorted by Lovell, Sands, Sir Nichols Vaux, a couple of Guards, and some commoners trailing behind. Buckingham stops to speak to the people, speaking directly to the audience.)

Buckingham: My good friends, hear what I have to say and then go home and forget me. I have been condemned to death—wrongly—as a traitor. I bear no malice toward anyone. I forgive my accusers. Let them enjoy their moment of triumph and deal with their consciences later. Those of you who love me, I carry you in my hearts until the moment of my death. All I ask is that you pray for my soul.

Lovell: Your Grace, I'm sorry that things have turned out badly for you. If I've done you any wrong, please forgive me.

Buckingham: You haven't done me any wrong, Lovell. You were only doing your job as Constable of the Tower. I even forgive Cardinal Wolsey. And if he ever speaks of me, remind him that you were with me when I had one foot in heaven. And I pray for the King and wish him a long life.

Lovell: Thank you, sir. I'll be taking you as far as the river, and then Sir Nicholas Vaux will take you the rest of the way.

Vaux: The barge is fitted out appropriately for a duke, sir.

Buckingham: Duke? A duke no longer, Sir Nicholas. They've taken my title from me—but they can never take the truth away. I take that to my grave, and may it haunt them.—You know, my father was executed by Richard the Third. And when Henry the Seventh defeated Richard and became King, he took pity on me and restored my title. And now his son takes it away again.—But at least I had a trial, which is more than my father had. *(To the audience)* Remember these words from a condemned man. You might give all your love and loyalty to someone and believe they feel the same way about you. And then something happens and they totally turn against you. So be careful who you love. And pray for me now, my friends. This is farewell.

(Buckingham is escorted out, leaving the two Gentlemen.)

1st Gent: This is terrible.

2nd Gent: There's more bad news to come.

1st Gent: What do you mean?

(The Second Gentleman looks around to make sure no one is listening.)

2nd Gent: The word is that the King intends to—shall we say—end his marriage to Queen Katharine.

1st Gent: Oh, that's an old rumour. The King told the Mayor to put a stop to it.

2nd Gent: But now it's for real. Either the Cardinal or somebody close to him has cooked up some sort of accusation or some technicality against the Queen—like the marriage was invalid to begin with. The Pope has sent Cardinal Campeius to advise on the matter.

1st Gent: Really.—Hmm.—You know, Wolsey wanted to be appointed Archbishop of Toledo, and the Emperor Charles wouldn't give it to him. And Charles is the Queen's nephew. So maybe Wolsey wants to get revenge by dumping the Queen.

2nd Gent: I think you've hit it. And she hasn't given the King a son, which is what he wants. He may have his eye on somebody else. Or Wolsey may want to fix him up with somebody.

1st Gent: Somebody French maybe?

2nd Gent: Betcha.—Come on, let's go someplace more private and continue this discussion.

(They leave.)

Act 2, Scene 2. *An antechamber in the palace. The Lord Chamberlain comes in reading a letter.*

Chamberlain (Reading): "My Lord Chamberlain, I collected all the horses you asked for, and just as I was about to send them to London, one of Cardinal Wolsey's men came along and seized them. He said his master would be served before any subject."—What a prick that fucking Cardinal is!

(Norfolk and Suffolk come in.)

Norfolk: My Lord Chamberlain.

Chamberlain: Hello, your Graces.

Suffolk: Is the King busy?

Chamberlain: I just left him. He's in a bad mood.

Norfolk: What's the matter?

Chamberlain: He's concerned about his marriage to the Queen. He thinks it might not be legal since she was married before to his brother Arthur. *[Author's note: The issue here is that under the laws of the Church, a man could not marry his brother's widow. The only exception would be if that marriage had never been consummated.]*

Suffolk: But that marriage was never consummated. At least, that's what I was given to understand.

Chamberlain: Me, too.

Suffolk: And now after twenty years, suddenly it's an issue?

Chamberlain: Apparently.

Suffolk: Maybe he wants to dump her for somebody else.

Norfolk: Wolsey must have his hand in this somehow. This is too big for him not to be involved.

Suffolk: Wolsey's a weasel. I wish the King would wise up about him.

Norfolk: He's the one who broke us up with the Holy Roman Empire.

Suffolk: Yes.

Norfolk: The King listens to whatever he says. And now he wants to send the Queen packing?

Suffolk: I've always liked her.

Norfolk: We all like her. She's a wonderful lady. She doesn't deserve this.

Chamberlain: The rumour is—(*Lowers his voice*) Wolsey wants to marry the King off to the French King's sister.

Norfolk: Aha. So that's it.

Suffolk: How did a scumbag like that ever get to be a Cardinal?

Norfolk: Anyway—we have some other business for the King.

Chamberlain: I'd advise you to save it for later.—I have to go.

(The Lord Chamberlain leaves. [The original stage directions have the King drawing aside a curtain, revealing himself in his study. An alternate staging would be a quick curtain down and segue to the King in his study as the Dukes come in. The King is reading some papers and looks unhappy.])

Norfolk: My lord?

King: What do you want? Can't you see I'm busy?

Norfolk: Sorry, my lord. But we had some business requiring your attention.

King: Never mind. Whatever it is, I'm not interested.

(Cardinal Wolsey comes in with Cardinal Campeius, the Pope's representative.)

King: My Lord Cardinal—glad to see you.

Cardinal: My lord, this is Cardinal Campeius, the Pope's representative.

King: Thank you for coming, sir. You are most welcome here.

Campeius: Thank you, my lord. The Pope has sent me to confer with Cardinal Wolsey about—this delicate matter.

King: Yes, yes. (*To Norfolk and Suffolk*) Would you guys just go?

(Norfolk and Suffolk bow and turn to leave.)

Norfolk (Aside to Suffolk): I'd love to be a fly on the wall right now.

Suffolk (Aside to Norfolk): Me, too.

(Norfolk and Suffolk leave.)

Cardinal: My lord, whatever the outcome of this matter, no one will be able to criticize you. The whole process will be absolutely impartial and scrupulous. (*To Campeius*) Isn't that right?

Campeius: Oh, yes. Absolutely.

Cardinal: The Queen will get every consideration she's entitled to by law.

King: Yes. I have to inform her what's happening.—Where's my secretary?—*(Calling)* Gardiner!

(Gardiner comes in.)

Cardinal: Here he is.—Hello, Gardiner. *(Aside to Gardiner.)* Remember who you're loyal to.

(Gardiner gestures aside to him that he is loyal to the Cardinal.)

King: He's a good man, my Lord Cardinal. I'm glad you recommended him.—Gardiner, a word with you.

(The King and Gardiner move apart and have a whispered conversation.)

Campeius: Wasn't Doctor Pace the King's secretary before?

Cardinal: Yes.

Campeius: And he went mad and died, didn't he?

Cardinal: Who told you that?

Campeius: That's what I heard. You kept sending him far away on errands until he lost his mind and died.

Cardinal: He was a fool, and good riddance to him. Gardiner, on the other hand, is reliable. He used to work for me.—And he still does—if you get my drift.

Campeius: Ah.—I see.

(The King gives Gardiner a letter.)

King: Now you take this to the Queen—and be very polite about it.

Gardiner: Yes, my lord.

(Gardiner leaves.)

King: I think we should hear this matter at Blackfriars. *[Author's note: A monastery in London.]* My Lord Cardinal, I leave it to you to make the arrangements.

Cardinal: Yes, my lord.

King: Tsk!—It's said. Very sad.—To leave my good Queen. And she's been good, you know.

Cardinal: Yes, my lord. Very good.

King: But it's a matter of conscience, after all. Doing the right thing—isn't it?

Cardinal: Yes. Absolutely.

Campeius: You are truly a noble King, sir.

(Scene ends without an exit.)

Act 2, Scene 3. *An antechamber in the Queen's part of the palace. Anne Bullen and an Old Lady come in.*

Anne: It's terrible that this should happen to the Queen. Such a good lady. No one could ever find fault with her. And now—Ach!—I hate to think of it.

Old Lady: Everyone sympathizes with her.

Anne: It's better to be a nobody and have nothing to lose than to be a queen and lose everything. I'd never want to be a queen.

Old Lady: Oh, don't be silly. I'd love to be a queen—and so would you. Admit it.

Anne: No, no. Not for all the money in the world.

Old Lady: How about a duchess? Could you stand to be a duchess?

Anne: No, thank you.

Old Lady: I wouldn't mind a title—any title. Even if it came with the worst plot of land in England.

(The Lord Chamberlain comes in.)

Chamberlain: Good morning, ladies. You're looking very serious.

Anne: We were talking about the Queen—feeling sorry for her.

Chamberlain: She'll be all right.

Anne: I hope so.

Chamberlain: By the way, I have some news that concerns you.

Anne: Concerns me?

Chamberlain: Yes. The King has taken notice of you. He likes you. And he intends to give you a title.

Old Lady: Ha! Lightning strikes!

Anne: Me? A title?

Chamberlain: Yes, madam.

Old Lady (Humourously): Ooh!—Madam!

Chamberlain (To Anne): You will be the Marchioness of Pembroke. And it's worth a thousand pounds a year.

Old Lady: A thousand pounds!

Anne: Well!—I have to catch my breath.—I hardly know what to say. Imagine me a marchioness.—Please thank the King for me. And may he live long and happily.

Chamberlain (Aside to the Audience): The King's really hot for her. Maybe you can guess where this is going.—I'll tell the King that I've spoken to you and you're very happy.

Anne: Thank you, my Lord Chamberlain.

(The Lord Chamberlain leaves.)

Old Lady: That's how it goes. I've been in the King's court for sixteen years, with no advancement to show for it. But you're a fresh face. He takes a look at you, and bingo!—You're a marchioness. And a thousand pounds a year to boot.

Anne: I never expected this, believe me.

Old Lady: There's more to come, girl. You just wait. Get used to the idea. You're going places.

Anne: I'm not going to think about it.—Look, don't mention this to the Queen, all right?

Old Lady: I won't say a word.

(Scene ends without an exit.)

Act 2, Scene 4. *[Historical time: 1529.] At Blackfriars. Trumpet flourish. A procession comes in, including Vergers (bearers of holy symbols), Scribes, Clerics, including the Bishop of London, a Sergeant-at-Arms, the two Cardinals, the King, and the Queen. The Queen sits apart from the King. [The Bishop of Canterbury is deleted from this scene.]*

Cardinal: Ahem!—I will read the commission from Rome.

King: Forget it. It's already been read to the public.

Cardinal: All right, then. We'll proceed. This Court is now in session.

(The Queen approaches the King and kneels before him.)

Queen: My lord, what have I done to deserve this? How have I offended you? What have I done wrong? I've been your obedient wife for twenty years. My father, King Ferdinand of Spain, and your father, Henry the Seventh, arranged this marriage. They wouldn't have done so if they'd had the slightest doubt that it was perfectly legal. I should have some of my friends from Spain here to speak for me.

Cardinal: There's no need, madam. We have plenty of religious authorities here who can consider all points of view.

Queen: My Lord Cardinal, don't think you fool me, because you don't. This whole matter is your doing. You're malicious and contemptible, and I refuse to be judged by you. I shall take this matter directly to the Pope.

Cardinal: Madam, you misjudge me. I have nothing personal against you. I have only chosen to proceed with this matter because the authorities in Rome agree with me.

Queen (Slowly and dramatically): Even so, ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. [*Author's note: This comes from Matthew, but it's from the King James Bible, which wasn't written yet. This is my added touch.*]

(The Clerics mutter "Oh-oh—" as the Queen walks out.)

King: She's been a good wife. I can't deny it.

Cardinal: Your Majesty, I feel truly stung by the Queen's remarks. Please tell me—tell everyone here—if I have instigated these proceedings.

King: No, you're not the cause. The Queen is just repeating what others have told her, but they're mistaken. For the benefit of all present, I'd like to explain why I'm seeking an annulment. It started with the French ambassador, who came to propose a marriage between the Duke of Orleans and my daughter, Mary. He wanted some reassurance that Mary was legitimate under the laws of the Church. And that caused me to consider. The Queen has not borne me any sons, only a daughter. Five other children—three of them boys—died in infancy. What could that mean? It had to be a divine judgment against the marriage. So what was I to do? The future of the kingdom was at stake.—My Lord Bishop of London, you remember when I talked it over with you, how unhappy I was.

Lincoln: Yes, my lord. And after a great deal of thought, I suggested having the marriage annulled.

King: And I got the same advice from the other learned clerics of this court. Of course, if you tell me the marriage is legal, I'll stay married.

Campeius: My lord, we can't continue today without the Queen present. We'll have to adjourn. In the meantime, we must dissuade her from contacting the Pope directly.

King (Aside to the Audience): I'm starting to wonder about these Cardinals. I wish my friend Thomas Cranmer were back. Him I trust. The others—well—(*Makes a gesture with his hand indicating uncertainty*).—Okay, court is adjourned.

(They all leave.)

Act 3, Scene 1. *The Queen is in her apartment in the palace. A couple of her Attendants are sewing. A Servant comes in.*

Servant: Madam, the two Cardinals are here to see you.

Queen (With a hard edge to her voice): Show them in.

(The Servant leaves, and a moment later Cardinals Wolsey and Campeius come in.)

Cardinal (Wolsey): Your Highness, may we speak to you?

Queen: All right.

Cardinal: Privately?

Queen: I prefer to speak and be spoken to openly.

(Wolsey exchanges a look with Campeius. The suggestion is that this is going to be a challenge.)

Cardinal: Yes, madam. We would like to know your views on the matter before the King.—Em, perhaps we can be of some help.

Campeius: Yes, madam. His Grace is willing to overlook your harsh criticisms, and we are both here to help, if we can.

Queen: How nice of you. You want to know my views? I hardly know what to say to such learned and holy men as yourselves. I'm all alone here in England—with no friends—and no hope.

Cardinal: Oh, no, no, no, no. You have many friends—and great hopes.

Queen: And who in this country will be my friend and risk crossing the King? My only friends are back home in Spain.

Campeius: Place your trust in the King, madam. Be nice to him.—Otherwise, the outcome could be difficult for you.

Cardinal: He's right, madam.

Queen: Don't pretend to care about me. It's obvious that you're both determined to see me ruined. Just remember that there is a higher judge than you.

Campeius: Oh, madam, you have it all wrong.

Queen: And you call yourselves Christians.—Tsk!—You should fear for your souls, gentlemen. You should be truly ashamed.

Cardinal: But madam, we're here to help.

Queen: Like the executioner helping the condemned to the scaffold.

Cardinal: Oh, madam—

Queen: I should place my trust in a King who clearly wants to be rid of me?

Campeius: Madam, you exaggerate.

Queen: Twenty years a faithful, obedient wife, and this is what I get?

Cardinal: I realize you're unhappy, madam, but—

Queen: I won't give up my title willingly. If I did, it would be like admitting some sort of guilt. Only death will separate me from my title.

Cardinal: Please don't speak of death, madam.

Queen: I wish I'd never come to England. This is a country of liars and phonies. I'm the unhappiest woman alive.

Cardinal: Madam, how can I convince you that we only want to comfort you? This is no time to be stubborn. You should be calm and gentle—especially with the King.

Campeius: Yes, madam. You don't want to lose the goodwill you still have with him.

(The Queen pauses, after which her tone is more conciliatory.)

Queen: Forgive me. Please let the King know that I still love him and that I shall continue to pray for him as long as I live.

Cardinal: We shall, madam. And I hope you will trust us to do what we can for you.

Queen (Ironically): Oh, of course.

(Scene ends without an exit, suggesting the conversation was not necessarily over.)

Act 3, Scene 2. *An antechamber to the King's apartment in the palace. The Dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk, the Earl of Surrey, and the Lord Chamberlain come in.*

Norfolk: Okay, guys, listen. If you want to get rid of Wolsey as much as I do, now's the time to make our move. If we close ranks against him, we can do it.

Surrey: I'd love to get rid of him after what he did to Buckingham.

Suffolk: He needs to be knocked off his pedestal, that's for sure.

Chamberlain: But don't forget how tight he is with the King. As long as he's in the King's favour, he's untouchable.

Norfolk: That's about to change. The King has found out some things about Wolsey. He's cooked.

Surrey: Seriously?

Suffolk: It's true. Wolsey wrote a confidential letter to the Pope—except that it fell into the King's hands instead.

Surrey: Really? What was in it?

Suffolk: Among other things, Wolsey wanted the Pope to delay the annulment—because—Wolsey doesn't want the King to marry your niece, Anne.

Chamberlain: Which makes no difference now, however, since he's already married her.

Surrey: What!

Suffolk: It's true. But it hasn't been made public yet.

Surrey: Well, I'm a happy guy!

Suffolk: So am I.

Norfolk: Me, too.

Suffolk: Campeius has gone back to Rome. He didn't even say goodbye to the King. But he's supporting Wolsey's plan to delay the annulment. And the King knows all about it now.

Norfolk: What about Cranmer?

Suffolk: Cranmer's back. He consulted a lot of high clerics, and they all agreed it was okay to annul the marriage. The King was glad about that, you can be sure. Now all that's left is to announce the marriage to Anne publicly and have the coronation.

Surrey: So what happens to Katharine now?

Suffolk: Katharine will now be referred to as the Princess Dowager.

Surrey: What the hell is a Princess Dowager?

Suffolk: It's bullshit. It's just an invented title. It's just a polite way of dumping her.

Norfolk: Cranmer will get promoted to archbishop. Just watch.

Suffolk: Oh—Wolsey's coming. Let's duck out of sight.

(The four of them move to the wing, and Cardinal Wolsey comes in.)

Cardinal (Aside): If I have my way, the King will marry the French King's sister—not Anne Bullen. The King's got to listen to me, not Cranmer. Cranmer will ruin everything.—Where's the King?

(The Cardinal leaves. Then the King comes in from the wing where the four Lords were standing, and they join him coming in. The King is holding Wolsey's incriminating letter.)

King: How did Wolsey accumulate so much wealth? Have you seen him?

Norfolk: He was just here, my lord. He seemed to be anxious about something.

King: I found this letter in my paperwork this morning—a letter from Wolsey to the Pope. Obviously, it wasn't intended for my eyes, but somebody wanted me to see it. *[Author's note: Shakespeare doesn't explain this, and, in fact, the incident is fictitious.]*

Norfolk: Perhaps an angel put it there for your sake, my lord.

King: Well, it's a good thing. I had no idea Wolsey had gotten so rich. What's he been doing all this time—managing the country's business or his own?

(Cardinal Wolsey returns.)

Cardinal (With exaggerated charm): There you are, my lord! May God and all the angels protect you forever!

King: How very spiritual of you, my Lord Cardinal. I wonder how such a spiritual man would ever find time to manage any earthly business.

Cardinal: I can do both, sir—even if it taxes my energy. I would never neglect my duties to the kingdom. I live to serve.

King: That's fine. You know, my father thought highly of you, and that's why I always kept you close to me. And I've been very generous with you, haven't I?

Cardinal: Yes, my lord. And though I may not have been worthy of such generosity, I do thank you—not only in words but in everything I do. At every moment all I am thinking of is your Majesty's good. *[Suffolk and Norfolk are gesturing aside to the audience.]* And every day I strive to make my loyalty more perfect than before.

King: Well said. You have a way with words. *[To the other Lords]* You see what a fine man he is?

(Suffolk coughs.)

King (To the Cardinal): Have a look at this. *(He hands the Cardinal the letter.)* You can read it over breakfast—if you can eat any.

(The King goes out, frowning, followed by the other Lords, smiling.)

Cardinal: What the heck? What's he angry about? *(He looks at the letter.)* Oh, fuck.—I'm dead.

(The four Lords return.)

Norfolk: Wolsey, hand over the great seal.

Cardinal: What?

Norfolk: Your seal of office. Let's have it.

Cardinal: Why should I?

Norfolk: The King's pleasure.

Cardinal: Show it to me in writing.

Norfolk: It's a verbal order.

Cardinal: I'm not taking any verbal orders from any of you bastards. You just want to tear me down because you're jealous. The King gave me the seal, and only he can take it back.

Surrey: You're ambitious to the point of sin, aren't you, Wolsey. I mean, the way you push your weight around and step on people. You plunder the whole kingdom. And you had Buckingham executed—my father-in-law.

Cardinal: You can't blame me for that. He had a fair trial.

Surrey: I swear, if you weren't wearing that coat, there would have been a sword in your belly a long time ago.

Cardinal: You hate my nobility—and my—my virtue.

Surrey: I love nobility and virtue—the way you love money. You're through, Wolsey. The King knows everything.

Cardinal: The King knows I'm loyal!—Regardless of—whatever—

Surrey: You wrote to the Pope without the King's knowledge. You tried to make yourself the Pope's spokesman so you could personally rule on the annulment. You wrote "I and my King"—as if you were the King's equal.

Suffolk: You went to see the Emperor Charles and you carried the seal outside the country, which is strictly forbidden. You carried on secret diplomacy without the King's knowledge. You had your own secret relationship with the Pope.

Cardinal: Shut up!

Suffolk: And you used your position to enrich yourself. That really pissed the King off.

Cardinal: No! It's not true!

Surrey: You bragged to the Pope how rich you were.

Suffolk: Wolsey, the King is going to issue a writ against you, seizing all your property. You no longer enjoy his protection.

Norfolk: And we'll tell him that you refused to hand over the seal.

(The Lords leave. Wolsey is alone. He is obviously despondent.)

Cardinal: Yesterday I was the second-most powerful man in England.—Today—I'm dirt.

(His servant Cromwell comes in, looking sad. [Author's note: Thomas Cromwell was a great-great-great uncle to Oliver Cromwell, if I'm reading the tree correctly. He was given the title Earl of Essex in 1540.])

Cromwell: My lord—are you all right?

Cardinal: Cromwell—have you heard? Do you know what's happened?

Cromwell: Yes, my lord. I feel like crying.

Cardinal (Speaking slowly): No, don't cry. I've been taught a lesson. I see how wrong I've been. I've been very foolish, Cromwell. I know that now. It's important to know oneself. If one has self-knowledge, one has hope for heaven. I have hope now. Do you understand what I mean?

Cromwell: Yes, my lord. I'm glad.

Cardinal: Do you have any news?

Cromwell: Sir Thomas More is going to replace you as Lord Chancellor.

Cardinal: Oh.—Thomas More.—He's a good man. Very intelligent. He'll do a good job.—What else?

Cromwell: Cranmer has been named Archbishop of Canterbury.

Cardinal: Has he now?—Oh.—Well, good for him.

Cromwell: And the King has already married Anne Bullen.

Cardinal: He has?

Cromwell: Yes.

Cardinal: I didn't know that.—That's what ruined me. Anne Bullen.—I never should have—well, it doesn't matter now.—Cromwell, there's no point serving me any longer. I'm finished. But you still have a future. Go to the King. He knows you're good. You're loyal. You'll get ahead in the world.

Cromwell: I hate to leave you, sir. You've always been a good master to me. I'll always pray for you.

Cardinal: I appreciate that. And when I'm dead and buried, you can say that I did right by you and helped you advance in life—and that I taught you a valuable lesson. Forget ambition. Put yourself last, behind those you serve. Be honest in your dealings. Let everything you do serve your country, God, and the truth. If your conscience is clear, you'll never fear death.—Cromwell, I have lost everything material in this life, but now I have hope for the next one.

(They leave.)

Act 4, Scene 1. [*Historical time: 1533.*] *A street in Westminster (London). The same two Gentlemen from Act 2, Scene 1 meet on the street.*

1st Gent: Hello, again!

2nd Gent: Hello! Come to see the coronation?

1st Gent: Yes, but the crowd's so thick you can't get near it.

2nd Gent: I wouldn't even try. Say, is anyone getting promoted today?

1st Gent: Suffolk and Norfolk. Suffolk is promoted to High-Steward, and Norfolk is promoted to Earl Marshal. And some other people are getting promoted, too.

2nd Gent: What's become of Katharine?

1st Gent: She's gone to Kimbolton Castle. She's sick.

2nd Gent: Oh, too bad. She's a good lady. I hope she gets better.

(Sounds of trumpets and cheering.)

1st Gent: There's the procession!

2nd Gent: Oh, my! Look at that!

1st Gent: There's the Marquess of Dorset.—And there's the Earl of Surrey.

2nd Gent: There's Suffolk and Norfolk.

(Loud cheers.)

1st Gent: There's the Queen! Queen Anne!

2nd Gent: Oh, she's magnificent! They all love her.

(A Third Gentleman comes in.)

3rd Gent (Wiping his brow): Hello!

1st Gent: Hello! Were you inside?

3rd Gent: Yes. God, it was so hot I could hardly breathe in there.

2nd Gent: So what was it like?

3rd Gent: It was awesome. The Queen was perfect. You could tell she was meant to be a queen.

2nd Gent: Who were those two bishops next to her?

3rd Gent: Stokesly and Gardiner. Stokesly is the Bishop of London now, and Gardiner is the Bishop of Winchester.

2nd Gent: Uh, oh. Cranmer better watch out now. Gardiner doesn't like him. At least, that's what I've heard.

3rd Gent: You heard right. But Cranmer will have a new friend now.

2nd Gent: Who?

3rd Gent: Thomas Cromwell. He's on close terms with the King now. He's already been made Master of the Jewel House and a member of the Privy Council.

2nd Gent: That guy's going places, just watch.

3rd Gent: Yeah, for sure.—I'm on my way to the court. Why don't you come with me?

1st and 2nd Gents: Sure. Glad to.

(They leave.)

Act 4, Scene 2. *Kimbolton Castle. Katharine is lying in bed, sick. Beside her are her servants Griffith and Patience.*

Griffith: How are you feeling, madam?

Katharine: Ah, Griffith, I don't have long to live.—Tell me, is it true Cardinal Wolsey is dead?

Griffith: Yes, madam.

Katharine: How did he die?

Griffith: He died before his trial. He stopped at the abbey at Leicester because he was too sick to travel, and he was there for three days, and then he died. They say he was very remorseful at the end.

Katharine: He had enough to be remorseful about. He was corrupt, egotistical, and two-faced. He was a bad example for the clergy.

Griffith: I don't disagree with you, madam, but I prefer to remember him for his good points.

Katharine: What good points?

Griffith: He rose from very humble beginnings. He was a scholar. He was highly intelligent. He founded the college at Oxford, which was a very good thing. He was kind and generous to those he loved. And he was penitent at the end. I give him credit for all those things.

Katharine: Then peace be with him. And when I'm gone, may you speak as kindly of me, Griffith.

Griffith: Everyone shall, madam.

Katharine: Patience, bring me another pillow.

(Patience brings her a pillow.)

Katharine: Griffith, have the musicians play something soft and gentle. I want to try to sleep a little.

Griffith: Yes, madam.

(Patience and Griffith leave. Then music is heard. [The stage lighting changes to suggest a dream-like state.] While Katharine is asleep, several angels dressed in white come in slowly. They circle the bed. Then each kisses Katharine on the hand or forehead. Then they leave slowly. [Stage lighting returns to normal.] Katharine awakens.)

Katharine: Wait! Come back!

(Griffith and Patience return.)

Griffith: We are here, madam.

Katharine: No, not you. I meant the angels. Didn't you see them?

Griffith: No, madam.

Katharine: Then I must have been dreaming. I dreamed of angels, Griffith.

Griffith: Oh—that's very good, madam.—Isn't it, Patience? *(A look of concern.)*

Patience: Oh, yes. It must mean something good.

Katharine: No more music, please.

(Griffith signals, and the music stops.)

Patience (Aside to Griffith): I'm afraid for her.

Griffith (Aside to Patience): I know.

(Griffith sees someone and leaves. Then he returns with Lord Capucius.)

Griffith: Madam, it's Lord Capucius. The King has sent him.

Katharine: Ah, Capucius. I remember you. You're the ambassador of my nephew, the Emperor Charles.

Cap: And your servant, madam.

Katharine: It's been a long time since I saw you. What brings you?

Cap: First, my own respect for your Grace. And second, the King asked me to convey his kindest wishes for your comfort.

Katharine: I'm beyond comfort, I'm afraid. How is the King?

Cap: He's well.

Katharine: And may he stay well when I'm dead and forgotten.—Patience, do you have that letter I wrote to the King?

Patience: Yes, madam. Here it is.

(She gives Katharine the letter. She gives it to Capucius.)

Katharine: Will you take it to him?

Cap: Yes, madam.

Katharine: I want him to take care of our daughter, Mary. [*Author's note: The future Queen Mary I.*] And I want him to arrange good marriages for my lady servants. And I want him to pay my men servants a bonus to remember me by. It's in the letter, but you tell him verbally as well, Capucius.

Cap: I will, madam.

Katharine: And tell the King that I blessed him before I died. He'll soon be rid of me.

Cap: Oh, madam—

Katharine: It's all right, Capucius.—Griffith, goodbye.—And Patience, I want flowers strewn on my grave. White flowers. And bury me like a queen—even though I no longer am one.

(Patience breaks down in tears, kneels by the bed, and kisses Katharine's hand.)

Patience: Oh, madam!

(Scene ends without an exit.)

Act 5, Scene 1. *A gallery in the palace at night. Gardiner, now Bishop of Winchester, comes in with a candle and meets Sir Thomas Lovell.*

Gardiner: Lovell, you're up late. It must be one o'clock.

Lovell: Yeah, I know. I was hoping to see the King. Is he up, by any chance?

Gardiner: Yes. He's playing euchre with his brother-in-law, Suffolk. I don't know how sensible men can waste their time on such foolishness.

Lovell: Well, I'm glad he's still up.

Gardiner: Why? What's the matter?

Lovell: The Queen's in labour, and she's having a bad time of it. They're afraid for her.

Gardiner: Oh, dear. I hope the baby will be all right.—As for the Queen—confidentially—I don't really care.

Lovell: Confidentially—I sort of agree with you. Not that she isn't a nice lady, of course. She's all right.—But she's—you know—she's on the wrong side of things.

Gardiner: A Reformer. Exactly. She and Cranmer. And Cromwell. I don't like them. Next thing you know, there'll be a whole Protestant Reformation. And I can do without that.

Lovell: It could happen. Cromwell is riding high these days. And he'll go higher, you wait and see. And the King loves Cranmer, so who's going to say a word against him?

Gardiner: Who? I will. That's who. And I have already. And I don't mind being the first. Others will follow.

Lovell: What have you done?

Gardiner: I denounced him to the Council as a heretic. And they've told the King they intend to examine Cranmer tomorrow morning. The sooner we get rid of him, the better.—Good night, Sir Thomas.

Lovell: Good night, your Grace.

(Gardiner leaves. Then the King and Suffolk come in.)

King: I've had enough for one night, Charles. My mind's not in it tonight.

Suffolk: This is the first time I ever won from you, sir.

King: Wait till next time.—Lovell, you have any news about the Queen?

Lovell: Her servant asks you to pray for her, sir. Her labour is difficult.

King: Tsk!—Oh, God.

Suffolk: She'll be all right. And the baby, too.

King: Of course. But say a prayer for them anyway. Leave me now, Charles.

(Suffolk leaves. Then Sir Anthony Denny comes in.)

King: Denny.

Denny: My lord, I brought the Archbishop of Canterbury, as you asked me to.

King: Good. Bring him in.

(Denny goes out.)

Lovell (Aside): This should be interesting.

(Denny returns with Cranmer, who looks worried.)

King: Lovell, step outside. I want some privacy.—You, too, Denny.

(Lovell and Denny go out.)

King: Well, my lord of Canterbury, I suppose you're wondering why I asked to see you at such a late hour.

Cranmer (Nervously): Whatever it is, sir, I'm your servant.

King: It's all right, Cranmer. *(Gives him a pat on the shoulder.)* I'm your friend. I just wanted to have a word with you.

Cranmer: Yes, my lord.

King: I don't mean to upset you, but I must tell you that some serious complaints have been made against you to the Council, and you'll have to appear tomorrow morning.

Cranmer: Oh, God, I was afraid it was something like that.

King: Now, just take my advice and be patient about it. They may want to put you in the Tower temporarily while they decide things, but that's just the normal procedure.

Cranmer: But what's it all about, sir?

King: Em—heresy—that sort of thing.

Cranmer: But I never—I never—

King: Calm down, calm down. Think of it as a storm. It'll blow over. Trust me.

Cranmer: I do trust you, sir. Thank you, sir.

King: I know you're a good man, Cranmer. You're one of the few totally honest men in the kingdom. If you had any indication of trouble, you should have come to me right away. I would have dealt with it personally.

Cranmer: I wasn't aware, sir. And sir, my conscience is totally clear. I don't see how anyone can say anything against me.

King: One's enemies will always find something to say, whether it's true or not. And you do have some enemies, and there's no telling what they'll try to do. So you must be cautious.

Cranmer: My lord, I count on you to protect me.

King: Yes, yes, I will. Don't be afraid. Tomorrow at Council, if you have to speak, just be yourself. Just be straightforward and speak plainly. That's the best thing.—Now, I'm going to give you this ring. *(He takes a ring off his finger and gives it to Cranmer.)* If you have to, show them this and appeal your case directly to me.

(Cranmer, in tears, kisses the King's hand.)

King: There, there. It'll be all right. Now you go on to bed.

(Cranmer tries to speak but is too choked up. He leaves.)

King: I swear he's the only honest man left in England.

(The Old Lady comes in.)

Old Lady: Blessings to you, my lord!

King: Let me guess. The Queen had her baby.

Old Lady: Yes!

King: And it's a boy.

Old Lady: Em-y-y-e-s—And she, I mean he—he looks just like you.—He does.

King: And the Queen is fine?

Old Lady: Yes, yes.

King: Excellent.—Lovell!

(Lovell returns.)

Lovell *(Smartly)*: Sir!

King: Give this lady a hundred marks. I'm going to see the Queen.

(The King leaves.)

Old Lady: A hundred marks? Is that all?—Well! Good thing I didn't tell him it was a girl.

(Lovell and the Old Lady leave.)

Act 5, Scene 2. *[Author's note: I have condensed two scenes into one, but Shakespeare still leaves us with a staging problem. King Henry and Doctor Butts are on an upper level overlooking the Council Chamber. This upper level needs to have a curtain. They will converse and then draw the curtain closed. Shortly thereafter, they will come into the Council Chamber. The conversation between Cranmer and the Doorkeeper, which begins the original scene, has been cut out completely, as it would make the staging even more problematic in presenting to an audience that is unused to the way Shakespeare does things.] The Council Chamber. King Henry and his physician, Doctor Butts, appear on a small balcony overlooking the Chamber. A curtain on the balcony is open.*

King: I wonder if Cranmer got any sleep last night.

Butts: Poor guy! Do you know they're making him wait outside in the lobby until he's called for?

King: Are they really?

Butts: Yes, my lord. Imagine—the Archbishop of Canterbury—a member of the Council himself.

King: What a lot of nerve they have!

Butts: Not nice at all, sir. No, indeed.

King: We'll hear more, Doctor Butts.—Shh!

(The King draws the curtain closed. Then, coming into the Council Chamber are the Lord Chancellor, Norfolk, Suffolk, Surrey, the Lord Chamberlain, Gardiner, and Cromwell, followed by the Doorkeeper. The Council members sit at a long table.)

Chancellor: Mister Secretary, call the Council to order.

Cromwell: Yes, my lord.—The Council is now in session. Our business today is the examination of the Archbishop of Canterbury—who apparently is not here.

Gardiner: He's outside.

Chancellor: Better let him in.—Keeper.

(The Doorkeeper leaves. Then Cranmer comes in and remains standing.)

Chancellor: My lord of Canterbury, we have been given to understand that you have been preaching heresies and have instructed your chaplains throughout the kingdom to do the same, contrary to the law, thereby causing great danger to peace and order throughout the kingdom.

Gardiner: Danger indeed, sir. And we must put a stop to it before the whole country is infected with this—this illness—that is euphemistically referred to as a Reformation.

Cranmer: My lords, my teachings have always been correct, and I have never done anything to threaten the public peace. And I challenge my accusers to stand up and say specifically what their accusations are.

Suffolk: We can't do that with you here because you're a counsellor yourself. It's a matter of protocol.

Gardiner: Yes. For that reason you'll be detained in the Tower so we can hear all the evidence against you—and then you'll understand what deep trouble you're in.

Cranmer: My, you're so dedicated to justice, aren't you, my lord of Winchester? Full of love and meekness and Christian humility—just as a high churchman should be. Do whatever you want. I'll clear myself.

Gardiner: You are a sectarian! A nonconformist! A heretic!

Cromwell: Calm down, sir. You should be polite.

Gardiner: I do believe, sir, that you are sympathetic to these heretics. Perhaps you are one yourself.

Cromwell: I am?

Gardiner: Yes.

Cromwell: I perceive that you have a forked tongue like a snake. Perhaps you are one yourself.

Gardiner: How dare you insult me!

Chancellor: Gentlemen—please! *(A silent pause.)* Ahem.—I believe we are agreed that the Archbishop of Canterbury should be taken to the Tower until the King makes his wishes known to us.—Yes?

All: Yes. Agreed.

Cranmer: Do I have to go to the Tower?

Gardiner: Of course. What else did you expect?—Guards!

(Two Guards come in.)

Cranmer: No! I will not be judged by you. I leave it to the King himself. This is his ring.

(He shows the ring.)

Chancellor: It is the King's ring.

Suffolk: Oops!—I warned you guys something like this would happen.

Cromwell: Aha!—Are you all happy now?

(The King comes in, looking very serious, and sits down.)

Gardiner: Praise God that we are blessed with such a good and wise and noble King!—a true defender of the faith!—who will pass judgment on this vile offender!

King: Gardiner—shut up.—Now, then, who among you believes that the Archbishop of Canterbury is not your equal?

Surrey: My lord, if you please—

King: No, I don't please.—You men are a disappointment to me. I expected better from you. You keep this man—the Archbishop of Canterbury—waiting in the lobby like a servant? Is that how you use your authority? I see too much malice here and not enough integrity. Well, let me tell you, you're not going to get away with anything underhanded as long as I'm King.

Chancellor (Gently): My lord, I'm sorry if we've made a bad impression. We merely intended to have his Grace detained in the Tower temporarily while we heard the evidence. There was no malice intended.

King: Good—because I owe his Grace as much gratitude for his love and service as any king ever owed a subject. So let's forget all this foolishness and be friends, all right?—My lord of Canterbury, will you grant me a request?

Cranmer: Anything, my lord.

King: There's a little girl who needs to be baptized, and I want you to be her godfather.

Cranmer: My lord, it would be a great honour.

King: Good.—Now, gentlemen, why don't you make peace with the godfather of my new daughter.

Gardiner: I will be the first, sir.

(Gardiner shakes hands with Cranmer, and then all the others do the same.)

King: That's more like it. Remember, gentlemen, be good to the Archbishop of Canterbury, and you'll have a friend for life.—Now come along and share my happiness.

(They all leave.)

Act 5, Scene 3. *This scene is deleted.*

Act 5, Scene 4. *A trumpet flourish. A Herald comes in and speaks directly to the audience. The characters come in as they are announced.*

Herald: Let all present know that on this glorious day, September 10, 1533, Princess Elizabeth of England is christened. God bless our future Queen and all those gathered today in celebration.—The Lord Mayor of London—his Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury—his Grace the Duke of Norfolk—his Grace the Duke of Suffolk—the godmothers to the new Princess, her Grace the Duchess of Norfolk *(Carrying the baby)* and her ladyship the Marchioness of Dorset *(Followed by lady Attendants)*—and his Majesty King Henry.

(More trumpets. The Herald prompts the audience to applaud.)

King: I thank you all. And when the Princess has learned to speak, she will thank you herself.

Cranmer: My lord, I shall make a prophecy.

King: Let's hear it.

Cranmer: The future Queen Elizabeth shall be a model for all to look up to. She shall be wise and good and mighty, loved by her friends and feared by her enemies. Under her reign England will be happy, prosperous, and peaceful. She shall live many years and remain chaste all her life. And when she joins the saints in heaven, her heir shall be a mighty King *[Author's note: James I, of course]*, under whose reign England will flourish and be more glorious and mighty than ever before.

King: Well! I like that prophecy, my lord of Canterbury. And I will be thinking of it happily when I'm on my deathbed.—Now let's all go see the Queen so she can thank you all. *(To the audience)* Tomorrow's a holiday, so you can take the day off. Blessings to you all!

(All leave. Then another Herald, dressed as a noble, comes in to deliver the Epilogue.)

Noble Herald:

Henry the Eighth was a jolly King and a singular Prince,

He lopped off more heads than any other before or since,

Including two wives, of which he had six.

The first was Catherine of Aragon,
Who bore him no sons, so she was gone.
Anne Boleyn also gave him a daughter,
Although it was not what he ordered.
She lost her head sadly,
Though she hadn't behaved badly.
The third was Jane Seymour, the one he loved most.
She bore him a son and then gave up the ghost.
His tears still wet upon his sleeves,
He got fixed up with Anne de Cleves.
She was no beauty, and that put his romance off—
He only kissed her on the cheek and never took his pants off.
His fifth was Catherine Howard, who was quite a hottie,
But she was adulterous and naughty.
She lost her head because of her tricks
And was followed by wife number six.
King Henry married Catharine Parr,
By which time he was fat as a car.
He had oozing sores and suffered from gout,
And that, my friends, is how he went out.
He fathered one King and two Queens—
Edward and Mary, and Elizabeth in between.
So let's hear it for the fat guy and forgive him all his sins.
Shakespeare loved him well enough to write this play for him.
The world has changed, there'll never be
Another King like Hen-er-y.
His spirit's watching right above us,
So let us hear how much you love us.

END

Posted on March 20, 2012 by Crad Kilodney, Toronto, Canada.

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